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Conference Abstract

Data Attribution from Download to Publication

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Abstract

Digitized natural history data are enabling a broad range of innovative studies of biodiversity. Large-scale data aggregators such as Global Biodiversity Information facility (GBIF) and Integrated Digitized Biocollections (iDigBio) provide easy, global access to millions of specimen records contributed by thousands of collections. A developing community of eager users of specimen data – whether locality, image, trait, etc. – is perhaps unaware of the effort and resources required to curate specimens, digitize information, capture images, mobilize records, serve the data, and maintain the infrastructure (human and cyber) to support all of these activities. Tracking of specimen information throughout the research process is needed to provide appropriate attribution to the institutions and staff that have supplied and served the records. Such tracking may also allow for annotation and comment on particular records or collections by the global community. Detailed data tracking is also required for open, reproducible science. Despite growing recognition of the value and need for thorough data tracking, both technical and sociological challenges continue to impede progress. In this talk, I will present a brief vision of how application of a DOI to each iteration of a data set in a typical research project could provide attribution to the provider, opportunity for comment and annotation of records, and the foundation for reproducible science based on natural history specimen records. Sociological change – such as journal requirements for data deposition of all iterations of a data set – can be accomplished using community meetings and workshops, along with editorial efforts, as were applied to DNA sequence data two decades ago.

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Keywords

natural history specimens, GBIF, iDigBio, data attribution, reproducible science

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